DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 397 014 SP 036 726

AUTHOR Newbold, Susan; And Others
TITLE Connections: Partnerships Helping All Students Succeed.
PUB DATE [Feb 96]
NOTE 6p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Teacher Educators (76th, St. Louis, MO, February 24-28, 1996).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Community Cooperation; Databases; Delivery Systems; Demonstration Programs; Educational Cooperation; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; *Inservice Teacher Education; *Integrated Services; *Partnerships in Education; Preservice Teacher Education; School Community Programs; *School Community Relationship; Social Support Groups; Student Needs; Teacher Education
IDENTIFIERS Missouri; William Woods College MO

ABSTRACT

This paper describes a professional development initiative aiming to develop strong school/community partnerships, building the capacity for integrated, school-linked services and developing diverse models for community collaboration. Early in the 1995-1996 school year, seven school districts in mid-Missouri were recruited to begin developing models for community collaboration. Each district identified a Leadership Cadre, to include: the district administrator; a building principal, a counselor or special service coordinator; and a classroom teacher. These groups met monthly at William Woods University to network and receive training on: identifying situations that place children at risk, developing coordinated approaches to meeting students' needs, and effectively linking the school to community resources. Following monthly training sessions, each cadre in turn trained its own community team (including parents, students, human services providers, and other community representatives). During the second project year, pilot sites plan to use these community teams to move toward more school-linked services for students and their families, while five additional pilot sites will be added per year. Additional features of the program include an online database of community resources, monthly inservice opportunities, an interdisciplinary forum for preservice teachers, and an annual special education conference. (PB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 397 014

Connections: Partnerships Helping All Students Succeed

Susan Newbold, Connections Project Director
Betty Tutt, Associate Professor
Nancy Foley, Special Education Instructor
Department of Education
William Woods University
200 West 12th Street
Fulton, Missouri 65251

Paper presented at the 1996 Annual Meeting of the Association
of Teacher Educators (ATE)
St. Louis, MO

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

S. Newbold

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SP036726

Connections: Partnerships Helping All Students Succeed

Project Background:

In 1993, the Missouri legislature passed what is known to Missourians as the Outstanding Schools Act. The new law mandated, among other things, the development of rigorous academic performance standards, curriculum frameworks, and assessments. For practicing teachers in Missouri, this necessitated a strengthened commitment to ensuring that all students, including those at risk for academic failure, meet high expectations. For institutions of teacher education, it meant a reevaluation of pre-service training programs to ensure that future teachers are prepared to meet the challenge of moving diverse populations of students toward new academic standards.

William Woods University, a private, women-centered liberal arts institution in central Missouri, is responding to the changing needs of educators through the implementation of the *Connections Project*.. *Connections* , funded by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, is one of several professional development initiatives that have been developed as a direct result of the passage of the Outstanding Schools Act. *Connections* supports the philosophy that all students can meet the high expectations defined in Missouri's Academic Performance Standards if they enter the classroom ready to take advantage of the learning opportunities that are available. It is, therefore, necessary for teachers and schools to consider students not only in the context of the classroom, but also in the larger context of their families and communities. In order for all students to be successful, schools must develop programs which allow families, human services providers, and communities to work together to provide support systems which surround children and encourage success both within and outside the school setting.

The components of *Connections* are designed to help schools develop comprehensive, coordinated programs to meet the needs of all students, including those at-risk; to build the foundations for districts to develop partnerships with their communities; and to ensure that prospective teachers are fully prepared to collaborate with professionals in other disciplines to consider students within the context of their families and the larger community.

Program Initiatives:

The *Connections Project* Pilot Program

Early in the 1995-96 school year, the *Connections Project* recruited seven volunteer school districts in mid-Missouri to begin developing models for community collaboration. Each district identified a Leadership Cadre including the district administrator; a building principal, counselor, or special services coordinator; and a classroom teacher. In October, Leadership Cadres began meeting monthly at William Woods University to network and receive training. Training for Leadership Cadres is focused on identifying situations that place children at-risk within pilot communities; developing comprehensive, coordinated approaches to meeting the needs of all students; and linking schools effectively to community resources. Following monthly training sessions, each Leadership Cadre, in turn, trains its own community team including parents, students, human services providers, and other community representatives to collaborate to meet the needs of children and families.

The goal of the *Connections Project* Pilot Program is to develop strong school/community partnerships that will build the capacity for integrated, school-linked services for students and their families and to develop diverse models for community collaboration that can serve as models to other schools and communities. Each pilot community has unique needs and resources; thus, the processes and resources for developing effective community collaboratives differ from site to site.

Leadership Cadre training is weighted heavily in process — building a community team; identifying community needs and resources; developing appropriate missions, goals, and objectives for the collaborative; breaking down barriers to community collaboration, etc. *Connections Project* staff provide on-site technical assistance in identifying community resources and facilitating community team meetings as necessary. *Connections* staff also conducts focus groups with youth and adults in each community to determine what specific risk and protective factors are present in that community.

During their second year with the project, pilot sites will use their community teams as a basis for moving toward school-linked services for children and families. It is anticipated that five additional pilot sites will be added to the program each year for the duration of the project. (At least one more year of funding will potentially be available through the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.) Each site will create a case study that will add to the body of knowledge pertaining to community collaboration and school-linked, integrated services.

Program Spotlights

Program Spotlights are regularly scheduled monthly inservice opportunities for educators and other interested professionals throughout the region. Two-hour sessions are scheduled immediately following Leadership Cadre training for the convenience of pilot site participants who wish to stay; however, Program Spotlights are open to anyone who would like to attend. Programs are focused on identifying Missouri's promising practices in at-risk education, school-linked integrated services, and general education reform issues. All Program Spotlight sessions are practitioner-provided to emphasize to educators that they can easily access "experts" in a variety of areas within their own peer group.

Resource/Referral Database and Online Resources for Educators

Connections is focusing on the use of technology to facilitate teachers' direct access to resources for children and their families. An online database of community resources is currently being developed for a counties in which a school district is participating in the pilot program. Many such guides are available from providers in the region; however, none are organized to meet the needs of educators. The *Connections* database is being designed with the input of classroom teachers so they easily access available resources to address issues arising in their own classrooms.

Additionally, *Connections* is creating a collection of resources pertaining to at-risk education and school-linked, integrated services in Dulany Library at William Woods University. Al materials in the collection are included in the University's online card catalog, CLIO, and are available to any educator in Missouri through inter-library loan. These services, as well as other *Connections Project* program information, are accessible through the *Connections Project's* World Wide Web home page at http://www.oseda.missouri.edu/dese/connections.

Increased use of technology among pilot site participants resulting from the development of this program component has emerged as a secondary benefit of the project.

A Demonstration Site for Collaborative Training

A primary goal of the *Connections Project* is to create opportunities for cross-training in professional preparation programs. Toward this end the *Connections Project* is working with the local county health department to develop a Family Resource Center which will potentially serve as a demonstration site for collaborative training of education students at the University. In

September 1995, the staff of the *Connections Project* submitted a Delinquency and Youth Violence Prevention Program grant to the Missouri Department of Public Safety on behalf of the local county health department. This $59,000 grant is providing the impetus for the refurbishing of a former elementary building which will eventually house parent and family education programs, adult education programs, referral into community social services, youth recreation opportunities, and academic support programs.

Connections Project staff members provide technical assistance in facilitating the development of a community collaborative effort that involves the local universities, the public schools, the Missouri School for the Deaf, community human services providers, churches, businesses, and other organizations. When the Family Resource Center's programs are in place, *Connections Project* staff will be working with education faculty to develop a proposal for each pre-service teacher to spend a period of time during the student teaching experience working at the Center in a service learning environment.

An Interdisciplinary Forum for Pre-Service Teachers

The *Connections Project* has taken initial steps to incorporate collaborative training into the University's teacher education program by developing an interdisciplinary seminar for new student teachers. It is becoming increasingly important for teachers to be able to consider situations in their classrooms from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. To address this need, the interdisciplinary component was introduced in the fall 1995 semester. During the seminar, student teachers worked in small groups to develop responses to classroom scenarios designed to elicit a multi-perspective discussion. They then presented their responses to a panel of experts from the legal, educational administration, social services, special education, medical, and juvenile justice fields. Panelists were asked to address each of the scenarios from the perspectives of their professions. Panelists ultimately reached consensus regarding "best practices" for each scenario.

Following are samples of scenarios that were addressed:

You have a child in your third grade classroom who seems to be having great difficulty in school. She constantly disrupts your lessons by talking, moving around the room, and creating distractions. In general, her academic progress has been poor. You feel that the child should be assessed for special services. You have contacted the child's parents, but they have declined to come to the school for a conference. They have told you that they do not see any behavior problems at home and have made it clear to you that they feel the child's poor academic progress is a result of your poor teaching. How would you handle this situation?

A child in your first grade classroom is frequently absent. When he does come to school, he is usually late. He almost always looks unkempt — his hair is uncombed, his clothes are dirty. He often appears to be tired, and you are sure he must be hungry, but he doesn't get to school in time for the breakfast program. You have tried unsuccessfully to contact his parents; the family does not have a telephone and notes you have sent home remain unanswered. How would you handle this situation?

Connections Project is currently compiling information from this seminar into an interdisciplinary resource booklet for new teachers. A draft of the resource booklet will be completed during the summer, and it will be reviewed by a broad representation of professionals, as well as by active classroom teachers. The resource booklet is being viewed as "work in progress" so that student teachers each semester can benefit from the experience of taking part in the panel discussion. The

fall seminar was so well-received that it was replicated for both students and active classroom teachers as part of William Woods University's Annual Special Education Conference.

The Annual Special Education Conference

In an effort to meet the inservice needs of educators and other human services professionals in the region, schools in Callaway County, Missouri, join forces annually to plan and host a local Special Education conference. Traditionally, it has been extremely difficult for small and/or rural schools in Missouri to stay abreast of changing practices and regulations in special education. The Annual Special Education Conference has provided a unique opportunity for William Woods University to collaborate with local K-12 educators to meet the professional development needs of local education agencies.

The conference is planned by a committee consisting of the directors of special services from three county school districts, the superintendent from one district, the outreach director of Missouri School for the Deaf, and the William Woods University Department of Education faculty member who is responsible for the Special Education Certification Program. The specific format of the conference varies yearly, depending on the needs of local educators. The planning committee meets for a brainstorming session early in the fall to discuss dates, logistics, and possible presentation topics. The issues brought forth from this committee become the outline from which the conference is developed. Since its inception, the conference has included "hands-on" sessions facilitated by local teachers, discussions of current regulations and changes presented by State Department of Education officials, motivational seminars, and presentations of current research. Each year, some sessions are developed specifically for regular education administrators and teachers.